



Accommodations • Coaching • Consultation

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GUIDELINES FOR DOCUMENTATION OF A LEARNING DISABILITY AT THE POSTSECONDARY LEVEL

Students with learning disabilities (LD) who are seeking support services from Rider University on the basis of a diagnosed learning disability are required to submit documentation to verify eligibility under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended.

Accommodation needs can change over time, and are not always identified through the initial diagnostic process. Conversely, a prior history of accommodation does not, in and of itself, warrant the provision of a similar accommodation at the postsecondary level.

These guidelines are provided in the interest of assuring that documentation is appropriate to verify eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids at the postsecondary level.

Documentation Guidelines of a Learning Disability

1. Evaluator Qualifications

Professionals determining diagnoses of learning disabilities and making recommendations for appropriate accommodations must be qualified to do so. These professionals typically include and certified and/or licensed psychologists. Evaluations completed by family members will not be accepted.

The report should be printed on letterhead, signed, and dated; the signature of the evaluator should include his or her credentials.

2. Testing

- Testing needs to be **comprehensive**. It is not acceptable to administer only one test for the purpose of diagnosis. Best practice dictates that the complete battery of every instrument be used. Minimally, domains to be addressed should include, but are not limited to:

Psychological:

Current levels of cognitive functioning are required. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (most recent revision) is the preferred instrument. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Tests of Cognitive Ability (most recent revision) or the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (most recent revision) are also acceptable.

Educational:

Current levels of functioning in reading, mathematics, and written language are required. The Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-- Tests of Achievement (most recent revision) is the preferred instrument. The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (most recent revision) is also appropriate.

- Testing should be **current**. Provision of reasonable accommodations and services is based upon assessment of the current impact of the student's disabilities on his/her academic performance at the postsecondary level; therefore, it is in the student's best interest to submit testing done at age 16 or older.

If testing is not current, the student may need to update her testing to meet these documentation requirements.

3. Evaluation Report

Documentation should validate the need for accommodations and services in the postsecondary educational setting, based on the individual's current level of functioning. The diagnostic report should include background information; a diagnostic interview; assessment of cognitive functioning and academic achievement; and a diagnosis.

- There must be **clear and specific** evidence and identification of a learning disability. Individual "learning styles" and "learning differences" in and of themselves do **not** constitute a learning disability. The diagnostician is expected to use direct language in the diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability, avoiding the use of terms such as "suggests" or "is indicative of". If the data indicates that a learning disability is not present, the evaluator should state that conclusion in the report.
- A well-written **clinical diagnostic summary** based on the comprehensive evaluation process is a necessary component of the report and should include:
 - A summary of the student's educational, medical, and family histories that relate to the learning disability;
 - A statement that the evaluator has ruled out alternative explanations for academic problems as a result of poor education, poor motivation

and/or study skills, emotional problems, attention problems, and cultural or language differences;

- A statement identifying how the learning disability substantially limits learning or a related major life activity;
- A rationale explaining why the recommended accommodations are needed and how they accommodate limitations of the learning disability. Accommodation history should be referenced;
- An addendum of scores.

Documentation Retention

Rider University policy requires that disability documentation be retained for seven years after a student has stopped attending. All submitted materials will be held in SASS as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Students have a right to review their educational record.

Students are encouraged to retain their own copies of disability documentation for future use.